



# Gov. may be dragged into freeway fight

**Kerry Fehr-Snyder**

The Arizona Republic

Apr. 16, 2007 03:33 PM

The executive committee of the Maricopa Association of Governments considered asking Gov. Janet Napolitano today to negotiate an alternate alignment on Gila River reservation land for the proposed South Mountain Freeway.

The seven-member committee drafted a letter to Napolitano dated today asking her to intervene in the debate because of the Arizona Department of Transportation's delays in preparing an environmental impact statement. But committee member Peggy Neely, a Phoenix City Councilwoman, proposed delaying the vote for 30 days and the rest of the committee agreed.

The regional group's executive committee has three choices when it meets again next month: Don't send the letter, send the letter or refer it to the full regional council for a vote.

In addition to Neely, the executive committee is comprised of the mayors of Mesa, Gilbert, Scottsdale, Surprise, Goodyear and Litchfield Park. The full regional council is comprised of 32 members of local governments in Maricopa County plus representatives of the three Native American communities and members of the state transportation board.

"This came out of some discussions that our chairman (Goodyear Mayor James Cavanaugh) had with other elected officials in the region," said MAG transportation director Eric Anderson. "The concern is with the delays in getting the (draft) environmental-impact statement done and getting on with the building of the (freeway)."

Earlier this month, *The Arizona Republic* reported that the timetable for the South Mountain Freeway's environmental report had slipped, marking the third time in the past year it has been pushed back.

A draft letter to Napolitano obtained by the *Republic* says the timetable has slipped yet again and is now scheduled to be completed by late 2008. Observers have speculated that the delays may give ADOT more time to negotiate an alignment for the 22-mile, 10-lane freeway on Gila River Indian land to the south and west of Ahwatukee Foothills.

The current alignment proposed by ADOT for the \$1.7 billion freeway is along Pecos Road and would require bulldozing about 250 homes and twice that many if it is built below ground level. It also would destroy three ridges in the South Mountain Preserve, the largest municipal park in the country.

"The question is if there's anything she (Napolitano) can do to get this process moving," Anderson said.

Doug Cole, a political lobbyist and chairman of the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee, said the proposal from MAG's executive committee is good news for those opposed to building the freeway on Pecos

Road.

"This is a logical step as is the issue progresses," Cole said Monday morning before MAG executive committee vote.

"It's always been the contention of the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee that we need to dialogue with the neighbors to the south and make it a win-win situation."

Cole said he assumes that state and possibly federal officials have been talking to leaders of the Gila River Indian Community for a freeway alignment on tribal land. A spokeswoman for the tribe did not return an e-mail request for comment today.

"I am under the assumption that there have been quiet discussions. I wouldn't say 'negotiations' because that infers there's an offer on the table to discuss one way or others. Discussions are being held quietly," Cole said.

Cole said such behind-the-scene talks would be customary for dealing with the Indian community. Similar negotiations took place with the Salt River-Pima Community, which struck an 11th hour deal years ago to build the 101 Freeway on tribal land by paying tribal land owners.

"Having quiet discussions would be a normal course of business dealing with a sovereign government. Every layer of government would have a role, especially the state," Cole said.

Federal officials, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Department of Transportation, also are expected to be at the bargaining table if a deal is discussed, Cole said.

Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon and Phoenix Councilman Greg Stanton, who represents Ahwatukee Foothills, have opposed the Pecos Road alignment repeatedly. But Napolitano has remained mum about the freeway and its alignment.

Her spokeswoman, Jeanine L'Ecuyer, would not comment on the governor's position, but added, "We've been working with GRIC and other parties."

Cole, of the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee, also said postponement of the proposed freeway's environmental assessment is good news for Ahwatukee Foothills residents who are opposed to the Pecos Road alignment.

"That's very helpful if fruitful discussions can be had" with the Indian community," he said.

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### Your comments

I wonder why they don't want to release the EIS. Is it possible that in its current alignment the freeway would be

bad for the environment? Duh. This freeway will become obsolete before its even completed. It won't solve traffic congeation. The solution to gridlock is not more freeways. We keep approving tax increases to relive congestion and all we get is more freeways,continued gridlock and nasty air to breathe.

Why can't we find a way to move large amounts of people in a safe and efficeint manner? (**Agusto3245**, April 17, 2007 08:45AM)

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Gosh, I can't believe anyone thinks this is a problem!! You want to "take" Indian land, you want to "take" land dedicated to a city park, and you want to spend \$1.7 billion to dig a quarter mile wide trench and invite the El Paso to L.A. truckers to come on over!! Why don't we just take the money and give it to the poor unfortunate people like Ronn who live in Ahwatukee and, for some reason, find it necessary to drive to the West Valley. They could buy houses over there and not spend their time and gas money sitting on the Broadway Curve. What is left over, we could use to build public transportation for necessary travel.(**Jon4201**, April 17, 2007 01:15AM)

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Stephen is right on many counts . . . if the freeway isn't built on Gila Res. land, it shouldn't be built. It's at least 10 years too late to build along Pecos, unless they choose to make Pecos a "parkway" the way the original Squaw Peak Parkway was intended. If the Gila people can't see the immense benefit the Salt River Maricopa tribe gets by having a freeway next to Scottsdale, then too bad for them. If they're holding out for the most money they can get, then good for them. The true "bypass" is indeed I-8 to SR-85, unless they can find a way to run a freeway through Maricopa up through Rainbow Valley. On the other hand, I like hiking up Quartz Peak, and a freeway there would suck, as it would in Ahwatukee. Screw the speculators who bought and flipped land along the alignment. As for the gov, the last time she took REAL action was when she hijacked Squaw Peak.(**5897**, April 17, 2007 12:57AM)

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Oh and one more thing, Stephen8762 sir, the feds CAN take Indian land away by use of the eminent domain law. States cannot, but the federal government can. If they step in and fix the freeway problem (which they should) it would work.(**Joe2817**, April 16, 2007 10:08PM)

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Oh no. Now you can be sure nothing will get done. Gov Napolitano doesnt know how to get ANYTHING done. She did nothing a couple years ago when we had the gas line ruptures and she again will do nothing.(**Joe2817**, April 16, 2007 09:58PM)

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The bad thing is when it is convenient for them. They want a soveriegn nation?

Fine, let's issue some passports, make crossings, and have them pay taxes.

Doesnt anyone get it? When do we say "enough"?

Oh, sacred land.. Give me a break. I can appreciate your opinion however, I am tired of giving my tax dollars away to those that squander it away.  
(**iotp5784**, April 16, 2007 09:51PM)

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iotp:

You have obviously no concept of soveriegn Indian nations, have you? You best study up on the treaties that were signed to \*create\* the reservations you so wantonly want to use "eminent domain" on.

"Eminent domain" doesn't apply, sir. Not in the context of a State freeway.

Good day, sir.(**Stephen8762**, April 16, 2007 09:19PM)

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"Take" yes you heard it "take" the land from the indians and build it there. Put the land to good use for once. Eminent domain.

(**iotp5784**, April 16, 2007 08:59PM)

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Yo, Marky Mark:

I don't understand a word that came out of your mouth. Seriously, dude... Get some sentence structure, capitalization and punctuation learn on in your life. Maybe, just maybe, people will read and understand the point you're trying to get across.

Learn stuff.

Late. "Ahwatukean" Steve(**Stephen8762**, April 16, 2007 08:59PM)

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the freeway needs to go where planned with one exception, it needs to connect with the 101 in the west, at 51st is stupid, everyday, from the 101 east on 10, traffic is backed up, there is no way the 'bypass' will help at 51st, anyone who is not an idiot can see that, but they also are the ones who bought a home knowing the freeway is going in, now they want 'more', take what the state gives you and move on...and south mountain was 'sacred' over twenty years ago when the route was chosen, the only change is developers and more idiots moving west with no roads and then crying about sitting in traffic. WTF?(**Mark8656**, April 16, 2007 08:30PM)

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Ronn, why so angry? I'm sure the people that live near Pecos Road might have a different opinion. Who told you to live in the East Valley when you obviously need to get to the west side judging by your inane posts...Here's hoping the Broadway curve is in your future for many, many years to come, you idiot.(**robert758**, April 16, 2007 07:03PM)

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Yo, Ronnie:

Not once did I mention the homes. It's not about that, mang. Get over the fight with the homeowners. I am an Ahwatukean, but not in the freeway alignment.

Yes, ideally it would be best to complete some sort of 202 Loop completion, but not at the expense of carving up South Mountain as the current alignment plans for. Nor should we pressure our neighbors to the south (GRIC) to force them into accepting the freeway on their lands.

It's just wrong on both accounts. We all can live without it. End of story.(**Stephen8762**, April 16, 2007 07:01PM)

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<<Stephen8762 stong forced involved>> What... a bunch of angry home owners that were not smart enough to build their home along a planned freeway route. Hmmm... sounds like they should get what they deserve. Take the money the state offers and build your house where there is no freeway. Quit your @#\$\$% crying about it! What makes Ahwatukee so special that the State cant build a freeway there.(**Ronn3627**, April 16, 2007 06:56PM)

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I'm completely fine with the current alignment never getting built. Let's see: Destruction of South Mountain ridges for another "loop" that really only serves a lazy trucker's bypass of Phoenix and a marginally better way for East Valley drivers to get to the west side? C'mon.

The trucker bypass of the Valley is already here: Going westbound on I-10, take Interstate 8 west to the 85, then north to I-10. Then you bypass everything in the Valley. Oh wait, I forgot about the warehouse giants on the Westside. Whoops. Tough luck, guys.

Mark my words: This will not get built in the current configuration. Too many strong forces are aligned (no pun intended) against it.(**Stephen8762**, April 16, 2007 06:48PM)

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Im sick of the Ahwatukee folks complaining about a freeway that has been planned for that area for years. So they decide to build their house in the freeways proposed path, then then get all upset out it. Get over it... the 202 loop should continue along Pecos and bulldoze however many homes that need be. There is nothing specail about Ahwatukee anyway... just like every other neighborhood in the East Valley. Hurry up and build the @\$%& freeway so I dont have to use the Broadway curve to get to West Phx.(**Ronn3627**, April 16, 2007 06:46PM)

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